

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /053 W

----- 123333

O 031900Z DEC 76

FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0830

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL MONTREAL IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL TORONTO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 00372

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CA

SUBJECT: REASSURING UNCLE

1. PAID FIRST COURTESY CALL THIS MORNING ON NEW QUEBEC MINISTER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, CLAUDE MORIN. HE SAID HE HOPED USG UNDERSTOOD PARTI QUEBECOIS GOVT IS NOT MADE UP OF RADICALS AND WISHED TO PURSUE MODERATE, FRIENDLY RELATIONS IN NORTH AMERICAN TRADITION WITH REST OF CANADA AND WITH U.S. WHILE POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY REMAINS BASIC TO PQ PROGRAM, HIS GOVT WILL FUNCTION AS PROVINCIAL GOVT WITHIN EXISTING CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT UNTIL CHANGES ARE MADE IN ORDERLY, DEMOCRATIC MANNER. REFERENDUM TO DETERMINE WISHES OF QUEBECOIS ON INDEPENDENCE ISSUE MAY COME IN TWO YEARS TIME OR COULD BE DELAYED LONGER. MORIN CONFIDED THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE NOT YET DECIDED WHAT FORM REFERENDUM MIGHT TAKE OR WHEN IT MIGHT BE PRESENTED TO PEOPLE. PLANNING, HE SAID, IS STILL IN VAGUE GENERALITIES. "AS YOU KNOW, WE DID NOT EXPECT RECENT ELECTION VICTORY AND WERE WAITING UNTIL AFTER ELECTION TO DEFINE POLICY," MORIN LAUGHINGLY CONFIDED.

2. TWO FEDERAL/PROVINCIAL CONFERENCES, SCHEDULED TO BE HELD
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WITHIN NEXT TWO WEEKS, WILL HELP ORIENT PQ STRATEGY, HE SAID.

THESE INITIAL CONTACTS SHOULD GIVE LEVESQUE AND COLLEAGUES BETTER IDEA OF ATTITUDES OF OTTAWA AND OF OTHER PROVINCES. QUEBECOIS HAVE AGREED FOLLOW AGENDA FIXED FOR CONFERENCES PRIOR THEIR COMING TO POWER. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION WILL BE ALLOWED ONLY ONE HOUR'S DISCUSSION AT END OF PREMIERS' MEETING, ACCORDING MORIN; A PERIOD OBVIOUSLY TOO BRIEF FOR ANY MEANINGFUL DISCUSSION OF SUCH A COMPLEX SUBJECT. CONFERENCE CAN NOT BE PROLONGED BEYOND MIDDAY ON DEC 14 AS PREMIER LEVESQUE MUST RETURN FOR SPECIAL SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHICH OPENS IN AFTERNOON OF 14TH.

3. MORIN PREFERRED NOT TO DISCUSS GOQ TACTICS IN NEGOTIATING CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE WITH OTTAWA. CLAIMED HE AND COLLEAGUES HAVE NOT YET THOUGHT THROUGH PROBLEMS. SAID IT IS CLEAR THAT TRUDEAU IS LOOKING FOR CLEAR CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE WITH WHICH TO CONFRONT PQ AND TO BURNISH HIS IMAGE AS DEFENDER OF FEDERALISM. PQ'S AIM WOULD BE TO PRECIPITATE EARLY CRISIS WHICH WOULD ALLOW HIM FORCE INDEPENDENCE CRISIS "PREMATURELY". LEVESQUE WILL ATTEMPT AVOID BEING MANOEUVURED INTO SUCH CONFRONTATION.

4. GOQ IS ENCOURAGED BY ENLIGHTENED, CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE DISPLAYED IN EDITORIALS IN TORONTO STAR. HOWEVER, MORIN SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE "DECENTRALIZATION" MORE PRECISELY DEFINED. "IT COULD MEAN EVERYTHING OR NOTHING. WE ARE STILL ULTIMATELY DEDICATED TO AN ASSUMPTION OF POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY, BUT WE WISH TO PRESERVE AS MANY OF THE USEFUL LINKS WITH THE REST OF CANADA AS POSSIBLE. IN OTHER WORDS," HE SAID, "WE WOULD NOT BE SATISFIED WITH SOME ARRANGEMENT WHICH SIMPLY GAVE US A DEVOLUTION OF POWERS LIKE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE OUR OWN TELEVISION PROGRAMS." IN SHORT, HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE ENCOURAGED BY SOME OF THE CONCILIATORY SIGNS COMING FROM ENGLISH-SPEAKING CANADA, BUT WISH TO SEE THESE GESTURES TRANSLATED INTO SPECIFICS BEFORE THEY DECIDE HOW TO REACT TO THEM.

5. WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS, MR. MORIN CAREFULLY STATED THAT LEVESQUE AND GOQ WANTED THE USG TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PQ IS NOT NEUTRALIST AND IS PLANNING TO DEFINE A DEFENSE POLICY. THE OLD "PACIFIST PLANK" IN PARTY PLATFORM WAS DRAWN UP BY THE SMALL GROUP OF INTELLECTUALS WHO WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPORTANT IN THE FOUNDATION OF THE PQ. HOWEVER, PRESENT LEADERSHIP HAS FOR SOME TIME RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR A CHANGE IN DEFENSE POLICY AND ACCEPTS THE FACT THAT "PACIFISM IS IMPOSSIBLE" IN THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTEXT IN WHICH QUEBEC MUST EXIST.

6. COMMENT: MORIN AND LEVESQUE ARE ANXIOUS THAT USG NOT SEE PQ AS DISRUPTIVE FORCE INIMICABLE TO AMERICAN INTERESTS.

MORIN INDICATED HIS UNDERSTANDING WHEN I AGAIN TOLD HIM
THAT USG WOULD PREFER A STRONG, UNTIED CANADA. HIS UNUSUAL
EMPHASIS ON NEED TO DEFINE DEFENSE POLICY WAS CLEAR EFFORT
REASSURE US THAT INDEPENDENT QUEBEC WILL TAKE WHAT IT VIEWS
AS REALISTIC VIEW TOWARDS CONTINENTAL DEFENSE AND RECOGNIZE
LEGITIMATE US CONCERN.
MCNAMARA

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976QUEBEC00372
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760448-0726
From: QUEBEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761275/aaaacmqr.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 AUG 2004 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REASSURING UNCLE
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CA, US, (MORIN, CLAUDE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006